

Legislative Issue Brief – EPA Ozone Standards



Catawba County Board of Commissioner's Legislative Goal

Oppose new EPA Ozone Standards

Background

On January 6, 2010 the EPA proposed new national ozone standards, reducing the current "primary" ozone standard (established in March, 2009) from 0.075 parts per million (ppm) to a level within the range of 0.060 – 0.070 ppm. In addition, EPA has also proposed establishing a separate "secondary" standard to protect the environment, particularly plants and trees. The proposed level for the "secondary" standard is within the range of 7-15 ppm-hours.

Previously, localities that exceeded the federal air quality standards (considered in non-attainment) were in danger of losing federal highway funds. Also, business/industry expansion in those communities was affected by additional federal permitting requirements that directly impact economic development and sustainability.

High air quality is important to Catawba County. In 2008, Catawba County partnered with nine other local government entities in the region to form the Unifour Air Quality Committee. By employing specific strategies for ozone reduction, the region's ozone level was reduced to 0.078 and the region was able to attain the standard for the first time. Since 2008, the EPA has twice reduced the ozone standard, resulting in "nonattainment" of meeting the standard by the County and the surrounding area. Catawba County opposes any reduction in ozone standards without the provision of resources that would allow the County to engage in additional reduction strategies.

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